

Message Text

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SUBJECT: AGREEMENT FOR NUCLEAR COOPERATION BETWEEN BOLIVIA
AND ARGENTINA

REF: BUENOS AIRES 2878

1. COBOEN (BOLIVIAN NUCLEAR COMMISSION) DIRECTOR FRANCISCO MARIACA AND CNEA (ARGENTINE NUCLEAR NATIONAL COMMISSION) PRESIDENT CARLOS CASTRO MADERO SIGNED ON APRIL 13, 1978, AND AGREEMENT FOR FOR NUCLEAR COOPERATION BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES. THE NEW AGREEMENT IS A SLIGHTLY MODIFIED AND ENLARGED VERSION OF AN EARLIER AGREEMENT SIGNED IN MARCH, 1970

2. THE AGREEMENT INCLUDES MUTUAL COOPERATION ON PEACEFUL USE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY. THE ASSISTANCE TO COBOEN IN DEVELOPING ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM IS BASE ON: A) THE PLANNING AND POSSIBLE FUTURE CONSTRUCTION OF A NUCLEAR RESEARCH REACTOR TO BE LOCATED IN THE RECENTLY INAUGURATED BOLIVIAN CENTER FOR NUCLEAR RESEARCH IN VIACHA ABOUT 30 KILOMETERS SOUTHWEST FROM LA PAZ; B) THE DEVELOPMENT OF BOLIVIAN RADIOACTIVE MINERAL RESOURCES ESPECIALLY IN THE PROCESSING OF RAW MATERIAL; (C) RADIOLOGIC PROTECTION AND NUCLEAR MEDICINE; AND D) JOINT COORDINATION OF PLANS FOR THE AREA. BESIDES THESE FOUR MAIN ACTION ITEMS, ARGENTINA WILL
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ASSIST IN THE TRAINING OF BOLIVIAN TECHNICIANS IN THE FIELDS OF NUCLEAR ACTIVATION ANALYSIS, CHEMICAL INSTRUMENTATION ANALYSIS AND NUCLEAR TECHNIQUES APPLIED IN AGRICULTURE AND INDUSTRY. BOLIVIA AND ARGENTINA WILL INTERCHANGE INFORMATION AND EXPERIENCE BASED ON AN INTERCHANGE PROGRAM OF SCIENTISTS AND TECHNICIANS.

3. BOLIVIA AND ARGENTINA AUTHORITIES HAVE RATIFIED THIS AGREEMENT AS ONE OF THE ELEVEN POINTS OF THE JOINT DECLARATION SIGNED IN LA PAZ BY BOLIVIAN FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER GENERAL OSCAR ADRIAZOLA AND ARGENTINE FOREIGN AFFAIRS MINISTER, REAR-ADMIRAL OSCAR ANTONIO MONTES, ON APRIL 21, 1978.

4. COMMENT: BOLIVIA IS THE THIRD SOUTH AMERICAN NATION TO SIGN AN AGREEMENT WITH ARGENTINA FOR NUCLEAR COOPERATION, OPENING FOR ARGENTINA FUTURE LEADERSHIP IN THIS FIELD. BOLIVIA'S EXPERIENCE IN NUCLEAR RESEARCH IS ALMOST NIL AND MOST OF THE DEVELOPMENT IN THIS AREA HAS BEEN LIMITED TO RADIOACTIVE MINERALS EXPLORATION AND TO A VERY LIMITED URANIUM EXPLOITATION AT COBOEN'S COTAJE MINE LOCATED ABOUT 350 KILOMETERS SOUTH OF LA PAZ. A PILOT PLANT WAS BUILT AT MINE SITE BY THE ARGENTINES (NOV. 1977), WITH TWO LEACHING CELLS TO PRODUCE 66 PERCENT U3O8 CONCENTRATES. PRODUCTION IN 1978 WILL BE ONE METRIC TON.

THE ITALIAN STATE COMPANY, AGIP, SIGNED WITH COBOEN AN EXPLORATION CONTRACT IN JULY 1974 (LA PAZ A-178, SEPT. 18, 1974) FOR FOUR AREAS IN SEPARATE REGIONS OF BOLIVIA WHERE INDICATIONS OF RADIOACTIVE MINERALS WERE FOUND BUT DRILLING FOLLOW-UP PRODUCED DISAPPOINTING RESULTS. AGIP, THE ONLY FOREIGN COMPANY CARRYING OUT URANIUM EXPLORATION IN BOLIVIA, WILL TERMINATE ITS OPERATIONS IN JULY 1978. OTHER COMPANIES FROM WEST GERMANY, FRANCE AND THE U.S. HAVE NEGOTIATED WITH COBOEN BUT NO CONTRACTS HAVE YET BEEN SIGNED. THERE IS A UNCLASSIFIED

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PENDING GOB REQUEST TO CONSIDER A BILATERAL AGREEMENT ON NUCLEAR COOPERATION WITH THE U.S. BUT IT REMAINS ONLY ON THE LEVEL OF PRELIMINARY TALKS. THE TRANSFER OF A SMALL U.S. NUCLEAR RESEARCH REACTOR FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA TO COBOEN THROUGH A SPECIAL AGREEMENT HAS APPARENTLY BEEN DROPPED BY COBOEN. PARA 2(A) ABOVE DOES NOT MEAN COBOEN WILL NECESSARILY BUY AN ARGENTINE MADE REACTOR BUT THAT THE ARGENTINES WILL HELP COBOEN EVALUATE ITS NEEDS AND PARTICIPATE IN THE BID PROCEDURE FOR A ONE MEGAWATT RESEARCH REACTOR. ONLY IF FINANCIAL TERMS ARE VERY ATTRACTIVE WILL THE ARGENTINES WIN THE BID. USDOC PLEASE PASS THIS INFORMATION TO GENERAL ATOMIC (TRIG DIVISION). THE EMBASSY WILL FORWARD A COPY OF THE BOLIVIA-ARGENTINA AGREEMENT TO THE DEPARTMENT AS SOON AS IT OBTAINS A COPY (IN ABOUT 2 WEEKS).
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